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**STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN JOEL HEFLEY
SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY INSTALLATIONS AND FACILITIES**

**HEARING ON THE FY1998 MILITARY CONSTRUCTION BUDGET REQUEST
PROGRAMS OF THE OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE,
THE DEFENSE AGENCIES,
AND THE ACTIVE AND RESERVE COMPONENTS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY**

FEBRUARY 27, 1997

The Subcommittee on Military Installations and Facilities meets today to begin hearings on the FY1998 budget request for the military construction and military family housing programs for the Department of Defense. While there are some positive aspects to the FY1998 budget request, on balance, I believe it falls far short of what is required to address the serious infrastructure problems facing the military services. The facilities shortfall and the dismal rate of recapitalization and modernization has been a central concern of this subcommittee and, aside from the request for new construction of barracks and dormitories, this budget request makes no significant progress toward the resolution of that problem.

The FY1998 budget request and the preliminary submission of the FY1999 budget request would continue a pattern of significant deterioration in the funding programmed by the Administration for military construction. The FY1998 request is 22 percent less than the FY1996 request and 25 percent less than the program enacted by Congress. The preliminary FY1999 budget submission would continue the erosion. In constant dollars, next year's budget request is expected to fall below eight billion dollars and would be nearly a one-third loss in buying power from the program enacted by Congress just two years

ago.

This decline is substantial and, given the rate of deterioration of the Nation's military infrastructure, represents an appalling lack of stewardship. I know that the Department of Defense is trying to do more with less and that, in large measure, is the problem. The crumbling of the Nation's military infrastructure is a problem that has grown over time under several administrations. Modernization will not be accomplished immediately. But, it cannot be accomplished in an environment which contemplates flat or declining funding from present budget estimates for the military construction programs of the services.

It is clear, based on the record compiled by the Subcommittee on Military Installations and Facilities over the past two years, that the services MILCON accounts would have to be double or triple their proposed level to begin to reverse the tide of crumbling infrastructure that threatens the long-term viability of the housing in which military personnel and their families live, the installations in which they train, and the facilities from which they deploy.

I acknowledge that the privatization of military family housing will, if implemented correctly, help with the military housing crisis we face. But, for basic infrastructure, there is no substitute for investment.

In the annual report provided to Congress in 1996 by then Secretary of Defense William Perry, he acknowledged that "deteriorated facilities undermine readiness". And, that theme has been sounded by numerous other senior officials of the Department of Defense since then, including Secretary Cohen. Unfortunately, outside of the request for troop housing, which, although it is \$148 million – or 20 percent – below current spending levels, is at least consistent with last year's request, the budget request does not begin the long overdue and badly needed reinvestment in basic infrastructure which is required to support the Nation's defense.

I look forward to the testimony of the witnesses today and I hope we can begin a process that can lead over time to a viable long-range plan for the re-capitalization and modernization of the installations that are critical to the Nation's defense.